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SHAKSPERE

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JOHN ROWLANDS

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BY

JOHN ROWLANDS

(Author of "ELLE DONE" AND SONGS).

LONDON:

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PREFACE

THE design of this little work is to show—rather than prove—that William Shakspeare, the actor, despite what has been written of late years to the contrary, and not Francis Bacon, the statesman, was the man who composed the great English dramas.

Some may consider such a work unnecessary, and the author himself would have maintained that opinion a few years ago. But having met with persons of all classes and students of all grades who fancy that Bacon was the real author, it is scarcely necessary to apologise for attempting to show—rather than assert—that the idea is preposterous.

The knowledge which these people, however, possess of the above standard authors—their lives as well as their works—is seldom very thorough, often superficial, a few parallel expressions from their

voluminous productions being sufficient, in their estimation, to settle the matter in favour of the philosopher, simply because he was a profound thinker and a great classic scholar. That he had no knowledge of the stage and of acting, and that a dramatist (of all authors) "is made as well as born," or that his contemporaries considered Shakspeare even greater than his own works, weighs not with them.

Then, the number of persons, often well educated, who have no settled opinion at all regarding the true authorship of the dramas is very considerable and increasing; while the man in the street, of course, is sublimely indifferent, unless occasionally he condescends to affirm that the Shaksperian authorship is impossible.

This is unfortunate, and the youths of the country should not be allowed to grow up in doubt when there is ample room for strong belief. The author of the greatest literary treasure of the world should be given his honours, and his native place its undying fame.

The author of this book, however, believes that a perusal of its pages would help to convince people of the unreasonableness of the controversy, and that it

would not only arrest the further progress of doubt in some, but contribute a little in confirming others in their belief that the actor, and no one else, was the author.

It is also hoped that young students will be led by its testimonies and arguments to further study the works of both these great English authors, and that in opening the casquet they may be rewarded with the jewel.

J. R.



SHAKSPERE OR BACON

SHAKSPERE OR BACON

THESE writers were contemporaries in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, Bacon being three years of age when Shakspere was born; but the statesman survived the actor ten years.

It is our purpose to show that, by looking carefully into their lives, and examining their works, and taking a common-sense view of the result (rather an uncommon practice), the author of our peerless Shaksperian dramas was not Francis Bacon, but William Shakspere.

Firstly, then, we will endeavour to show that Bacon could not possibly have written them, and that to attribute the authorship to him is absurd. Francis, Lord Bacon was a statesman of the highest rank, a matter-of-fact philosopher, a metaphysician, an historian, and a writer of miscellaneous productions in

prose. All this we learn from contemporary evidence and history; but there is absolutely no evidence to prove that he ever had anything to do with a theatre, or that he interested himself at any time or in any way in the drama, or that he bestowed any marks of favour or patronage upon the actors and playwrights of his time. On the contrary, the labours of his life, the dearest ambition of his heart, and the bent of his great mind, show him to be at the opposite pole. Whether we consider him as a lawyer, a statesman, a philosopher, a scientist, or a writer of profound disquisitions—in the years of his aspirations, of his honours, or of his disgrace—we are confronted with the same difficulty—How could such a man take such a passionate and all-absorbing interest in playhouses, and in the composing of works so very different in their aim and purpose to what he was famed for, and what to his dying day he prided himself in, viz., the revelation of the simple truth, simply told. From his earliest manhood down to the last days of his life, he directed his magnificent genius towards reforming our system of human knowledge—appealing thus to the few and not to the many. He was essentially a teacher. From earliest manhood he appears to have

been determined to serve his country in the capacity of a statesman, despite his predilection and love for original research in science and philosophy. When quite a young man, he gave utterance to his cherished thoughts in these words (*De Interpretatione Naturae Proemium*), "Whilst I was surmising that I was born for pursuits useful to my fellowmen, and that statesmanship was among other pursuits; whilst I was thinking of them as free to all, like the very air and water, I sought after that one which would be the most useful to the human commonwealth, and for which I was by nature the best fitted. But I found that there was nothing in that commonwealth so deserving as the invention and promotion of those new studies and arts by which man's life might be benefited. I judged that my own mind had a special familiarity and affinity with truth. Nevertheless, imbued as I was, both by birth and education, with political habits, and undetermined in opinions, thinking that I owed something to my country more special than to any other objects, and hoping that, if I could attain an honourable position in the State, I might be able to fulfil my philosophical intentions with a greater facility of talent and of business habits, I have devoted

myself to the study of civil science" (Impetus Philosophici).

He chose, consequently, public life and statesmanship, devoting his leisure hours to philosophy. About the end of the year 1595, when 34 years old, and when William Shakspeare's works were being acted and published as his own—he himself being the admiration and envy of his contemporaries—Bacon wrote to Essex in a fit of disappointment, if not of hopeless despondency, complaining of the delay that had occurred in making him Solicitor-General in succession to Coke. He wrote—

"I must confess this very delay hath gone so near to me as it hath overthrown my health. I cannot but conclude with myself that no man ever read a more exquisite disgrace; and, therefore, truly, my lord, I was determined, if Her Majesty reject me, this to do. My nature can take no evil ply; but I will, by God's assistance, with this disgrace of my fortune, and yet with that comfort of the good opinion of so many honourable and worthy persons, *retire myself with a couple of men to Cambridge, and there spend my life in my studies and contemplations without looking back.*"

What does the reader think of the purport of that

letter? Could Bacon, who was bowed down with utter chagrin and grief, be the author of those plays, mostly comedies, that were being composed at that time, and whose originality and beauty, like their reputed author, "were the applause, delight, and wonder of the world"? We say impossible, Bacon then being in a veritable "slough of despair."

In the year 1597 Bacon gave to literature his beautiful "Essays, etc.," and that was the most auspicious and memorable year in the great man's life—as an author. It was his greatest effort to secure a lasting position in the republic of letters. We must, however, give the title of his work in full, which was, "Essays, Religious Meditations, Places of Persuasion and Dissuasion, 1597." Herein we are enabled to see clearly, "as in a glass," the mind of the author; for his style is solemn and sedate, befitting the profound philosopher that he was; and even his humour is not of that bright and buoyant kind which illumines the pages of the Shaksperian dramas. Moreover, these writings, though genial enough, reveal a reflective and a subjective mind throughout—serious, contemplative, and spiritual—while the plays that were appearing in that very year—comedies, histories, and tragedies—are

quite the reverse, being, of course, objective—mirthful, realistic, or terrible; the production of a myriad-minded soul, a soul that was able to take into itself the entire life and world of man, within him and around him; now affecting us with the lamentations and anguish of the human heart, then delighting us with its joys, its aspirations, and its dearest love—a whole world of covert realities revealed to our eyes. The Shaksperian dramas and the Essays of Bacon are at the opposite poles—particularly in feeling and passion; and though the dramas contain all the teachings and philosophy to be found in the Essays, with a great deal more, the latter have nothing of that brightness, light, life, and myriad-reflectiveness of the former, the spectacular illumination that fascinates us is wanting. The dramas transcend the Essays as the gorgeous summer transcends the budding spring. The dramatist revelled in nature as the child revels in the green field; indeed, in him nature herself was glorified. We know the mind of the author of the Essays, great though it is; we can see into his heart. But the dramatist—he, like an angel, though seeing all, is himself unseen.

In 1598 Bacon was arrested for debt, which, how-

ever, was not so much a proof of his dishonesty as of his impecuniosity. Still, there is the fact; he was in trouble, and scarcely in the frame of mind to write interludes and love songs. But does not impecuniosity in certain positions of life bespeak the want of moral grit, if not of moral rectitude? It does; but the due adjustment of private affairs to meet altered circumstances is ever synonymous with good character.

Bacon's treatment of his friend and benefactor, Lord Essex, who actually endeavoured to console him by the gift of an estate of land after he had been unsuccessful in his application for the two offices of Attorney-Generalship and Solicitor-Generalship, gives us a pretty clear insight into his character, which was incompatible with that of a great poet, especially a great dramatist, who, though he lays bare the weakness and villainy of man, is ever careful to reward their virtues. It shows Francis Bacon to be, though by no means "the meanest of mankind," or even of great men, at least devoid of that moral grandeur which one might easily associate with his intellectual greatness. He was lacking in conscience and heart, for he was actually one of the counsel against the unfortunate young earl. Fancy a friend transformed without pro-

vocation into an adversary! Essex was horrified: human nature was outraged. And having compared the defendant to Cain for taking up "an excuse by impudency," Bacon said, "All you have said or can say in answer to these matters are but shadows, and therefore, methinks, it were your best course to confess and not to justify."

In answer to this gratuitous advice, Essex exclaimed, "May it please your lordships, I must produce Mr. Bacon for a witness." And when he proceeded to do so by producing Bacon's letter to the queen, he added, "It will appear what conceit he held of me, and now otherwise he here coloureth and pleadeth the contrary."

To this Bacon replied with much bitterness, and the earl was condemned. He was executed, while Bacon lived—to be disgraced.

It is idle to urge in extenuation of the great man's conduct that he merely did his duty, for he was not commanded to prosecute the earl, and the nation was surprised at his callousness in doing so. With all his philosophy, Bacon forgot for the nonce that he owed a duty towards humanity, not to mention his honour.

It was there the great man erred, and it is there

that we find him incapable of raising himself to the higher level of a great soul, such as the author of the dramas must have been. He seemed to consult his own interest in most things, which must have disqualified him to enter heartily into the hallowed precincts of inspired song—a song of nature and of love.

In the year 1600 the plays “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*” and “*Much Ado about Nothing*” were published. It were uncharitable to suggest that the indignation of the crowd, and the sullen demeanour and averted looks of his fellows at his treatment of Essex, suggested to him the title, “*Much Ado about Nothing*,” or that he regarded the trial of his life-long friend as a comedy; but it is natural to suggest that the man who spent a whole week in studying the law of treason to arraign and condemn to death his greatest benefactor, while all England stood surprised and aggrieved—it is natural to suggest that he could scarcely revel in comedy at that very period.

Indeed, the comedy, “*As you like it*,” as hath been well observed by Charles Knight, seems to refer in a very pointed manner to Bacon; for the comedy, without doubt, was written when Essex was in prison, and when Shakspeare’s literary patron—Southampton—

was under the ban of the court, for having married, without the consent of the queen, Essex's cousin, Elizabeth Vernon.

The railings of Jacques are pointed and significant enough as when he says, alluding to Essex—

“ Then being there alone
Left and abandoned of his velvet friend.”

How could Bacon have written such a line, or summoned up his fortitude to write in the same play?—

“ Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.”

Or,

“ Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits, forgot :
Though thou the waters warp
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friends remembered not.”

There can be no shadow of doubt as to whom these beautiful lines refer ; and Bacon, if he were in the habit of attending Shakspeare's theatre, must have known it, and felt it. Fancy the inexorable and ungrateful counsel at this time composing such lines, or afterwards putting into Mark Antony's mouth, “ In-

gratitude, more strong than traitor's arms, quite vanquished him"! Impossible.

But if his ingratitude was great, his obsequiousness was greater still, which, indeed, was most remarkable in a man of so majestic an intellect. Verily, he was not of that fine stamina that has made the world what it is. His obsequiousness, verging on actual servility, to promote his own self-aggrandisement, was often intolerable even in an age of sycophants. This cannot be denied. His letter to King James, while that monarch was only on his way from Scotland to wear the crown of England, shows how a great man can indulge in adulation and flattery. A part of it runs thus—

"I think there is no subject of your majesty's which loveth this island, and is not hollow and unworthy, whose heart is not set on fire, not only to bring you peace-offerings to make you propitious, but to sacrifice himself a burnt-offering or holo-caust to your majesty's service."

When a great philosopher utters such sentiments, it is only natural for the Sovereign to believe in his divine right. Such servility, even when we take into consideration the circumstances under which it was

written and the customs of the period, was simply outrageous, and a certain proof that while a man may be a giant in intellect, he may be only a dwarf in the other attributes of the soul. Throughout life, Francis Bacon fretted, fawned, and flattered, which to us demonstrates his incapacity to write plays, and especially so many of them pregnant with sentiments of freedom—the divine right of the people.

No, Lord Bacon's heart, with all its uneasiness, arising from unrequited ambition and the sting of his own ingratitude, could not have produced the playful dramas, teeming with the happiest sallies of the affection. His mind possibly might, but his heart—never. It required someone whose heart was glad, and at peace with all mankind, more especially with its own self. But Bacon was a disappointed man throughout life. Indeed, we have it for a fact that when the great Shaksperian comedies were being composed, some tragedy was being enacted in the spirit of Bacon. His heart seldom showed that exuberance of life which is essential to the successful inditing of a great comedy. It is preposterous, therefore, to suppose that he wrote those remarkable plays; there was no play in his bosom. His premature anticipation of the Lord

Chancellor's death, and his very extraordinary conduct in committing himself to the King by his prospective pledges—this also shows him to have lost much of that delicacy of honour which he in his works—with all honesty, we do not doubt—extols so much. Perhaps his private affairs, which seldom held him above anxiety—his pecuniary difficulties being considerable at most times—tended to make his sense of honour less keen, he being ever ready to avail himself of any opportunity to satisfy his ambition, if only he might manage to preserve his outward dignity.

The following letter to King James, written early in 1615, shows how eager he was to jump into live men's shoes, not to mention dead ones. We refer to the Chancellorship, while the occupant was still alive. He wrote: "You worthy Chancellor, I fear, goeth his last day. God hath used to weed out such servants as grew not fit for your majesty; but now He hath gathered to himself one of the choicer plants, a true sage, or salvia, out of your garden. . . . I shall now again make oblation to your majesty, first of my heart; then of my service; thirdly, of my place of attorney, which I think is honestly worth £6,000 per annum; and, fourthly, of my place in the Star

Chamber, which is worth £1,600 per annum, and with the favour and countenance of a Chancellor much more. . . . If you take my Lord Coke, this will follow—first, your majesty shall put an overruling nature into an overruling place, which may breed an extreme ; next, you shall blunt his industries in matter of your finances, which seemeth to aim at another place ; and, lastly, popular men are no sure mounters for your majesty's saddle. For myself, I can only present your majesty with the glory of a cheerful obedience."

We shall leave the reader to form his own opinion of the man who wrote that letter—a man who, while indecently anticipating the death of a trusted servant, was not above depreciating the services of another who happened to be a competitor for the same office.

To us, Bacon was too importunate to be strictly honourable, and too indifferent to other people's welfare to merit our regard. He lacked that nobility of soul which the author of the Shaksperian dramas must have possessed. He was not a poet in the higher sense, or he would have loved more fondly and sacrificed more. The lives of the greatest men, it would appear, weighed but lightly upon his conscience, for

in 1618 he lent his mighty influence to bring in judgment of guilty against Sir W. Raleigh. Was that compatible with the love of a great poet? Can the reader conceive of the author of our great life-dramas ranging himself to effect such a tragedy upon one of the noblest of his race? Impossible—utterly so. We quarrel not with Bacon for doing his duty as a lawyer, but we cannot help censuring him for want of love. We can see the statesman, and even the philosopher, in this act, but where is the poet—that son of nature and of love? Where?

The country liked not Bacon for that business, and when his fall came he had no sympathisers. Indeed, his fall, we fear, was not the result of one solitary, unfortunate action (which oftentimes has more virtue than vice in it), but years of selfish intrigues culminating in dishonesty. And what a fall! The greatest statesman and scholar in the land, upon his own confession, was found guilty by his peers of corrupt practices in the highest office of Parliament, and was sentenced to pay a fine of £40,000, to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure, to be ever incapable of holding public office, place, or employment; also, that he should never more sit in Parliament, nor come within sight of the court.

And this happened in the year 1621, about the time the Shaksperian dramas were being collected and collaborated by two of William Shakspeare's "pious fellows"—fellow-actors—out of sheer love and admiration for his genius and worth. This edition was complete, appearing two years later as the works of William Shakspeare. It is prefaced with a magnificent eulogy by Ben Jonson, the actor's life-long friend, and a portrait of the author appears therein as they all knew him. Now, if Bacon were the author of the dramas, unequalled in the dramatic literature of the world, is it not reasonable to suppose that he would have claimed them as his own, *now* that he was in such disgrace and indigence? His letter to King James at the time proves that his destitution was breaking his heart. Surely the author, Francis Bacon, who was so ambitious and so covetous of honour, would scarcely have failed *now* to claim those peerless productions as his own, and so retrieve some of his lost credit and position in the land. To suppose differently is to confess that Bacon had not the faintest idea of their merit; but having spent his best years in composing them, and had allowed a certain actor (who, by the way, was not the best) to ap-

propriate to himself the sole honour of their authorship, was satisfied *even yet* to allow those masterpieces to go down to posterity the work of an impostor, while he himself lived in comparative penury and disgrace—an utter wreck! All this, of course, is an absurdity, a monstrosity of mental delusion, such as no man with an even-balanced mind can believe. Bacon, of all Shakspeare's contemporaries, was not the man to do it. Even if his practices had been somewhat corrupt, his mind was yet too powerful to play the absolute fool—to heap undying honour upon a dead man while he himself retreated to the grave “unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.”

All his literary life had been spent in the revelation of truth; was he now going to perpetuate a lie for the sake of another? Impossible.

To the Count Gondomar in June of that year (1621) he writes, “Now, indeed, both my age, the state of my fortune, and also that of my genius, which I have hitherto *so parsimoniously satisfied*, calls me, as I depart from the theatre of public affairs, to devote myself to letters; to marshal the intellectual actors of the present, and to help those of future time. *Perchance that will be my honour*; and I may pass the

remainder of my life as if in the vestibule of a better one." There we have an author who is supposed to have written the marvellous plays, in addition to his own numerous and masterful productions in prose—his greatest work, "Novum Organum," appearing only a year previous (1620)—lamenting the fact that he had hitherto so parsimoniously satisfied his genius, but determined to devote himself to letters, which was to be his lasting honour.

This he did, for during the years 1622-25 he issued his enlarged edition of the "Advancement of Learning," with five other books, certified as his own works. What of the folio edition of the dramas that appeared in 1623? Was all that sustained effort of at least 20 years—years of high hope, of ambition, and of delight—to result in nothing better than a lie? And were these works, one and all, to be counted as nothing, he having but parsimoniously satisfied his genius? Obviously, Lord Bacon felt no interest in those productions.

Perhaps the following extract from his Will will further help to prove that this voluminous and splendid writer never composed poetry, much less plays, to entertain the populace of London:—

“For my name and memory, I leave it to men’s charitable speeches, and to foreign nations and the next ages. Two register books—the one of my orations or speeches, the other of my epistles or letters—I do devise and bequeath them to the right honourable my very good lord bishop of Lincoln.”

No hint of the dramas or any other form of song! Certainly not; but, like the statesman and philosopher he was, he mentions his orations, speeches, epistles, and letters. Though gifted, doubtless, to write a certain kind of poetry, he preferred the “unvarnished tale.” He was the philosopher of nature, but not its poet. Even his death was accelerated by a simple scientific experiment. He had conceived the idea that snow would act like salt in the preservation of natural substances. And in thus experimenting upon a fowl he caught cold, from which he died. Even in his old age, that time of tender and poetic contemplation, the great man had no room in his heart for sentiment and passion, but only for the stern realities of life. His death explained his life: he was a philosopher.

As to Bacon’s works, they all show almost prophetic wisdom and keen observation, while his aphorisms are terse and vigorous. But he is never

passionate (and passion is the soul of poetry) or even playful; and while his humour is pleasant, if philosophic, it has little of that genial warmth found in the dramas. Moreover, his style is quaint, and his vocabulary, when compared with that of the dramatist, is decidedly meagre, while his diction has not that flow and melody which so much distinguish all the Shaksperian plays. Indeed, so quaint is his style, and so infelicitous withal, that he never suggests the poet. And the whole trend of his mind was for the simple truth, as against the subtle fancy of the poet. There is no author in the whole range of English literature so unlike Shakspeare as Bacon is, especially in style and spirit. The myriad-mindedness of the author of the plays, with all his sprightliness of diction, music and mirth, and the utter abandon of spirit, are not to be seen in his productions.

Bacon revelled in learning and in the analysis of things, while the dramatist revelled in nature in all her moods. He even crossed the bounds of "space and time," and stood like a seraph in the midst of heaven, surveying all! O the abandon of that man's soul!

Bacon occasionally speaks of the poets, but in-

variably as writers different to himself, and makes no allusion to anything in the form of song ever composed by himself. In his essay on "Fame" he writes thus:—The poets make Fame a monster; they describe her in part finely and elegantly, and in part gravely and sententiously; they say, "Look how many feathers she hath, so many eyes she hath underneath, so many tongues, so many voices, she pricks up so many ears. This is a flourish. There follow excellent parables, as that she gathereth strength in goings; that she goeth upon the ground, and yet hideth her head in the clouds; that in the daytime she sitteth in a watch-tower, and flyeth most by night; that she mingleth things done with things not done; and that she is a terror to great cities . . . *but we are infected with the style of the poets.*" Might we not fairly infer from these words that Bacon did not consider himself one of the poets, though occasionally infected with their style? We think so. If we are not mistaken, he had no great admiration for poets. We are suspicious that he had some contempt for the fanciful thought fancifully told. How people can imagine that such a man could have condescended, so to speak, to write plays surpasses our understanding,

especially when we consider that he was hard pressed for time, according to his own confession, to pursue even those studies and writings that were congenial to him.

But granting that Bacon did compose a few of the Shaksperian masterpieces (for what purpose we cannot conceive), what of the others equally powerful, Shaksperian, and beautiful? For no one, possibly in the face of what we have written, will contend that a man who was himself a most voluminous writer of standard prose—some new work emanating yearly from his hand—could have found time, with all his work as a lawyer, M.P., a statesman of the highest rank, a Lord Chancellor—in honour, trouble, and dishonour—to compose all the comedies, tragedies, histories, and romantic plays of Shakspeare, and that, be it remembered, for the mere practice (or curiosity) of composing. For his profits by their sale would not have been very considerable in those days. Love of composing the plays it could not be, for his love throughout life was for philosophy and scholarly pursuits of all kinds. Besides, he had no time, according to his own confession, to pursue even those studies which were congenial to him; and in a letter written

in 1617 he asked pardon of the King for being behind with his account of council business, "because the flood of business of justice did hitherto wholly possess me." Such were his words and excuse fully six years before the dramas were published. Moreover, has he not confessed in his letter to Count Gondomar that he had satisfied his genius but *parsimoniously*? This is an all-important confession. The great scholar knew well that philosophy was his forte, and complains that he had not been able to do himself justice.

Then, how and where and when did he acquire a knowledge of the playwright's art—an art which can only be mastered by a thorough and practical knowledge of the stage—the grouping, the movements, the position of his characters—the correct poising of the picture? Then, the technical language of the stage had to be mastered; yes, and the very carpentry of playwriting, though that was rude enough in the time of Shakspeare. That author, however, knew his work: the stage was his home. And in the prologue to King Henry V. he apologised for the unworthy condition of the stage, and asks pardon for the spirit

“That hath dar’d
On this unworthy scaffold, to bring forth
So great an object : can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France ? or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air of Agincourt ? ”

But Bacon could have had no knowledge of these things. Fancy the profound philosopher, the sedate chancellor, studying such matters, and that for the sake of honouring another! In his essay on “Love,” he begins thus—“The stage is more beholding to love than the life of man is ; *for as to the stage, love is even matter of comedies, and now and then of tragedies.*” Love even a matter of comedies and tragedies! How strange, to be sure! And this from the greatest of dramatists! To us these lines are clear proofs that Bacon knew but little of the stage and less of plays. Love even a matter of comedies and tragedies—sunshine the life of the day! What wonder! Verily, Bacon was a stranger to the theatre. It has been remarked as something very extraordinary that Bacon makes no mention of Shakspeare, whom he must have met in the dramatic performances given before Elizabeth and James, and whose fame as a poet and

dramatist showed him to be without a rival. That is so; but neither does he make any allusion to any other great dramatist of his time, simply because he lived in quite another world of literature, the drama being too playful and fanciful to appeal to his ever thoughtful and subjective mind. Judging fairly from his works, his disposition, and his life, Bacon could have had no pleasure in the company of actors and dramatists; himself was his own society. It is manifest from his letter to Essex he cared not for society so much as for seclusion where he could pursue his studies with a couple of men of kindred minds to himself. Yet the great philosopher loved splendour, the banquet he gave at York House on entering his 60th year (five years after Shakspeare's death) affording ample proof of this. Jonson was one of the guests; and, after duly celebrating the "fare, the wine, and the men," he breaks out into verse, wherein he panegyrises his host—

"England's high chancellor, the destined heir
In his soft cradle, to his father's chair."

Political honours, obviously, were uppermost in Jonson's mind when speaking of his great master and

host ; politics, not poetry, though a complete edition of the dramas was before the country at the time. Surely if Jonson knew Bacon to be the author of those immortal works he would scarcely have failed to make some allusion, however covertly, to them.

As to the identical or parallel expressions found in the works of these authors, though there may be a similarity in the thought conveyed (which should cause no great surprise), the spirit and the music of the setting is quite different. There is nothing of that flow and magnificence of expression to be found in anything that Bacon has written, which is a common characteristic of Shakspeare: his diction is slow and heavy. And therein lies the one great difference between them. The following, for instance, are often quoted as proving the same authorship—

Bacon: “Be so true to thyself as thou be not false to others.”—Essay, “Friendship.”

Shakspeare: “To thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”
—“Hamlet.”

How different is all this! and yet it is only what we might naturally expect: the one a masterly setting

of the truth, and the work of a poet; the other a simple rendering, the work of a philosopher. As to the idea conveyed in those lines, it is simple enough, such as any thoughtful man might utter and which must have found expression by others long before they were uttered by these great authors, who, though we cannot accuse them of wilful plagiarism, must have gleaned liberally from others.

Again *Bacon* writes—"The souls of the living are the beauty of the world."

Shakspeare writes—"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! the *beauty* of the world."—"Hamlet."

The philosopher's saying, in our opinion, is not satisfactory, being only half the truth. It is scarcely appropriate to say that the soul has beauty to material vision. How different is that of the great dramatist—man (not his soul only) the beauty of the world. How much more true is that than Bacon's, which speaks of the soul (and why say soul of the living?) as the beauty of the (material) world! How infelicitously expressed!

Besides, was not "Hamlet" written years before Bacon penned that line? Another:—

Bacon—"Considering that love must creep where it cannot go."—Letter to King James.

Shakspeare—"You know that love must creep where it cannot go."—"Two Gentlemen of Verona."

The dramatist gave utterance to that line before Bacon indited his, for the play had appeared before King James ascended the throne.

Bacon writes—"As there are certain hollow blasts of wind, secret swellings of seas before a tempest, so are there in states."—Essay: "Sedition."

Shakspeare writes—

"Before the days of change, still is it so,
By a divine instinct man's mind mistrusts
Ensuing danger; as by proof we see
The waters swell before a boisterous storm."

—"Richard III."

There is here a vast difference in the setting, that of the dramatist by far being the best. Besides "Richard III." was mentioned in Mere's "Treasury of Wit," in the year 1593, whereas the Essays did not appear till 1597. But two writers in the same period can easily give expression to identical sentiments and

truths. Nevertheless, the statesman had the advantage of the actor in this particular, seeing that all the latter's work became public property, and their choicest lines part of the common parlance. Besides, Bacon had ample opportunities at court to hear the works of the dramatist rehearsed, and telling truths and epigrams would take hold of his mind unknown to himself. And, further, Ben Jonson, his private secretary, in common with other friends, would scarcely fail to entertain him with some choice passages from the masterpieces that were being continually acted in town, and under such distinguished patronage. We maintain that Bacon had the advantage of Shakspeare in that way. But whatever may be said of the truths and sentiments conveyed in the writings of these two contemporaneous authors, Bacon's wording has none of that flowing diction and magnificence which is so characteristic of the plays. Nothing in English literature is more quaint, stiff, and unpoetical. The thought only is but half the saying, like the sermon of the thoughtful preacher who fails in delivery; the clothing of the idea in suitable language with a rhythm that fixes it in the memory is the perfect epigram. And in that the author of the

dramas is matchless, Bacon's vocabulary being but ordinary, while the spirit that animates the whole writings of the dramatist is conspicuous in those of the essayist only by its absence. He is always perspicuous, like the dramatist and all really great writers, but the animation is wanting—the work of a philosopher, and not a poet. A few passages here and there in his works readily lend themselves to rhythm and metre—naturally enough. It were strange if there were none; no writer can escape this. But that is not writing blank verse, as some critics have imagined, and is quite a different thing to that mellifluous diction which animates all the prose work of genuine poets. Every educated man can write a line of five feet, but there are very few *poets* that can write good blank verse, with its irregular periods of melodious rhythm. Even Tennyson failed; his lines are lacking in cohesion, vigour, and animation. And Browning is lacking in melody, his lines being distorted and without charm. The following sentences have been quoted as examples of Bacon's blank verse:—"The coronation followed two days after"; "at which time Innocent the Eighth was Pope"; "into an honourable foreign war"; "but his aversion

to the house of York"; "and from that land to the wild wilderness."

Truly these are rich examples of blank verse; every man utters such sentences every day. And where is the poetry of the line? We could cull thousands of such sentences from any work taken haphazard out of a second-hand roadside stall. Yet, strange as it may appear, such poor evidence as this is sufficient to convince some take-for-granted people of the Baconian authorship of our incomparable Shaksperian dramas, whose blank verse is life itself, every word being pregnant with meaning, and every line having its mysterious and distinctive charm. It takes hold of the reader instantly—ever a good criterion of merit.

To prove that rhythm and metre is found in any prose work, we append the following, which are better examples than those of Bacon—even those of the rugged Carlyle are better.

Carlyle—We open anywhere in his "Heroes," and find the following, amongst many more, facing us:—"Unguarded anger, blindness, many things"; "The European World was asking him"; "stagnant, putrescence, loathsome accursed death"; "a brutal lethargy

is peaceable"; "the Old was true if it no longer is"; "Answered a Falsehood when it questioned him, Dost thou believe me?—No."

Professor Huxley ("Lessons in Physiology")—"This, redissolved in a dilute saline"; "this substance has been called fibrinogen"; "it is exceedingly like globulin"; "the water and the solids of the blood"; "the gaseous matters are carbonic acid"; "and there are some conditions of the blood"; "in man, these crystals have the shape of prisms."

Proctor ("Borderland of Science")—"The meteors of this system were pursuing"; "across the inner glowing atmosphere"; "so far as we could judge it merged itself"; "the radical aspect now presented by"; "the relatively rapid motions of the moon"; "there are no terms by which the beauty of the scene can be described."

Dr. Johnson (from the first pages of "Rasselas")—"The outlet of the cavern was concealed"; "this lake discharged its superfluities"; "it fell with dreadful noise from precipice"; "all animals that bite the grass, or browse"; "the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks"; "the subtle monkey frolicked in the trees"; "and all delights and superfluities."

Professor O. M. Edwards (from the first pages of "The Story of Wales")—"Beyond the Valley of the Dovey, to (the South)"; "among these, here and there, rise fastnesses"; "within this narrow fringe of fertile land"; "between the wheat lands of the Vale of Clwyd"; "their stormy heights a better nursery"; "the silent and majestic solitude . . . has sunk into the Welshman's character . . . which is the basis of his life and thought."

Such lines may be found in all writers—*ad infinitum*.

Then, the triplex style found in both these great authors is another argument advanced to prove that the statesman and not the actor indited the plays. The following have been cited:—

Bacon—"Read not to contradict and refute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse"; "reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man"; "nature is often hidden, sometimes overcome, seldom extinguished."

Shakspeare—"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them"; "this peace is nothing but to rust iron, in-

crease tailors, and breed ballad-makers"; "this chair shall be my state, this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown."

The above quotations certainly are similar enough in form, but how different in spirit! Mere form is nothing, especially when it is not original to the writer, but the spirit of the expression is all important. Any young student of literature would be able to point out instantly which of those sayings are those of a poet and which those of a philosopher. The style is a natural one, and not confined to any age or nation, and not altogether unknown to other authors of the Tudor renaissance. Besides, might not the philosopher have copied the style from the actor, who, of course, was a public character; and being an elocutionist by profession, that form of speech, amongst many more, would have suggested itself readily to him. Shaksperc and Bacon had to study speech—the actor in particular, and the great dramas would have been an impossibility without his art.

These specimens, however, give us no evidence of Lord Bacon's ordinary style. It is in the ordinary, oftentimes, we find the extraordinary—and the author always. The following letter, which is a fair sample

of his epistolary style—and epistles always show the writer—prove him to be almost devoid of that mellifluous diction so common among true poets. It was written to Sir Thomas Bodley with the presentation copy of “The Advancement of Learning.”

“ Sir,

“ I think no man may more truly say with the Psalm, *Multum incola fuit anima mea*, than myself; for I do confess since I was of any understanding, my mind hath in effect been absent from that I have done; and in absence are many errors which I do willingly acknowledge, and among the rest this great one that led the rest; that, knowing myself by inward calling to be *fitter to hold a book than to play a part, I have led my life in civil causes*, for which I was not very fit by nature, and more unfit by the pre-occupation of my mind. Therefore, calling myself home, I have now for a time enjoyed myself, whereof likewise I desire to make the world partaker. My labours, if I may so term them that which was the comfort of my other labours, I have dedicated to the King, desirous, if there be any

good in them, it may be as a fat of a sacrifice incensed to his honour. . . .”

We submit that such a style is too quaint and measured to suggest the authorship of our great dramas. Every true poet, without an exception, is a writer of perfect prose, flowing and felicitous; the music of the verse insinuates itself into it unknown to himself. But Bacon is philosophic even in style, and seldom suggests the poet. How different is the prose of the plays! Let the reader compare the two—the *Essays*, for instance, and any of the dramas. That Bacon, however, called himself a concealed poet is no proof that he was one in the general acceptance of the term. To conceal his identity in order to confess as much is a little too absurd even for the credulous.

What Bacon obviously meant was simply to suggest that, having studied nature and revealed her truth, he had the mind, if not the music, of the poet; he was the poet in everything but in the form—“concealed one.” Much as we speak of certain preachers and prose writers as true poets—not in the manner, but in mind and heart.

Such was Francis Bacon. But if he was a poet in

the fuller sense, where are his productions? Surely one of the greatest and most influential men in the realm was not under the dire necessity *throughout life* of suppressing his name if he cared to give utterance to his noble thoughts and feelings in verse rather than prose. No man was ever placed in such a position. No, the philosopher was not a singer, or he would have sung openly, sooner or later, in one form or another, if only for curiosity's sake. He that has joy in his heart cannot suppress it long. Bacon from bondage would have delivered Bacon, like Cassius of old—

“Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Could be retentive to his strength of spirit.”

Bacon was a philosopher, and not a singing poet. To sum up, we maintain that there is absolutely no tittle of evidence, either in his life or works, to show that Bacon wrote a line of the Shaksperian plays; it is all a hollow surmise. Indeed, his exalted position in the land, his profession, his ambition, his cares, his troubles, his disgrace, his disposition, and the trend of his powerful mind, made the production of that galaxy of artistic dramas by him an impossibility. His only

qualification was his great knowledge, which, however, was not of the spirit of nature and of man—the many moods of his mind and heart as delineated in the various characters, but rather of the cold and abstract world. And without passion, as every true philosopher is, his very qualification must have proved a disqualification, resulting in prosy disquisitions, but not in plays. His life throughout seemed devoid of that sweet poetry which is common to our lives, his heart being often sore and moody—now uneasy and distracted in its aspirations, then untruthful in its exaltation, and finally bleeding in its disgrace. How could such a heart revel in comedy, or rouse itself to overwhelm us in tragedy? There was too much ambition, mixed with disappointment, in the great philosopher's heart to care for amusing others; and as there was little pecuniary advantage to be gained by the writing of plays and selling them to another, the statesman Bacon, we submit, was not the man to waste his talents and opportunities in their pursuit.

WILLIAM SHAKSPERE

WILLIAM SHAKSPERE.

SHAKSPERE was an actor, a playwright, and a part-proprietor of theatres, having adopted the stage as a profession when quite a young man. He retired from the stage at the age of forty-six, and died six years later, having known no other vocation. Consequently, this author's life was spent in the dramatic world, writing original plays and amending others.

He had distinguished himself as a playwright amongst his confreres when about twenty-four years old. Chettle praises the excellence of his acting also at that age. He published in the year 1593, under his own superintendence, his "Venus and Adonis," dedicating it to the Earl of Southampton. This poem was a fitting prelude in knowledge, thought, and power to the magnificent dramas that followed. The dedication is quite interesting as showing the style of the

author, which, we venture to say, is altogether different to that of Bacon, being more easy, graceful, and flowing than is that of the essayist in any of his works.

It is as follows:—

“To the Right Honourable Henry Wriothesly,
Earl of Southampton and Baron of Tichfield.

“Right Honourable,

“I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear (cultivate) so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

“Your honour's in all duty,

“WILLIAM SHAKSPERE.”

“*Lucrece*” was published in 1594, dedicated to the same nobleman. The style of the dedication is more familiar, showing how he had grown in his lordship’s favour. It is as follows:—

“The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end, whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; meantime as it is it is bound to your Lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.

“Your Lordship’s in all duty,

“WILLIAM SHAKSPERE.”

The “unpolished lines” and the “untutored lines” are satisfactory from one who, compared to Bacon, was not a classic scholar. Such expressions would not have been used by the statesman, he being at that time a ripe scholar impressed with his own genius. As to “*Venus and Adonis*” being the first heir of

his invention, it is just possible that it really was his first attempt at composition, but kept back until he had acquired some fame as an actor and a playwright, when he might make an advantageous dedication. But "Venus and Adonis," as well as "Lucrece," which at least are certified as Shakspeare's own productions, needed no "strong prop" to hold them up; for they are worthy of the author of the dramas in every way, and indeed form a mirror in which the authorship of those remarkable works may be distinctly seen. They form a kind of key to his whole productions, many passages therein being equal to our choicest excerpts from the dramas, with innumerable lines and expressions that prove the same mind and heart. Here we have the same rich vocabulary, the same familiarity with both physical and spiritual things, the same terrible but correct qualifications, and the same strong denunciation and hatred of vice, which he discloses only to kill. Such expressions as "rotten death," "unstained thoughts do seldom dream on evil," "all orators are dumb when beauty pleadeth," "light and lust are deadly enemies," "soft pity enters at an iron gate," "leaden slumber," "foul infirmity," "frozen conscience and hot-burning will," "thoughts are but

dreams till their effects are tried," "modest eloquence," "remorseless wrinkles of his face," "dissentious jealousy," "melodious discord," "tears harden lust though marble wear with raining," "murder with a kiss," and a hundred others—"Lucrece" in particular being as truly Shaksperian as any of his finest masterpieces. The way he apostrophises Opportunity in that work is more terrible than anything found in his dramas: a whole cataclysm of inspired hate is hurled at the wicked. No preacher ever denounced impurity like that young author did, and it is surprising that he is not held up as much for his moral good as for his intellectual greatness. The poem "Lucrece," while it contains some of his choicest passages, such as "Time's glory is to calm contending kings," and "Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?" has scores of expressions and sayings the parallels of which might be found throughout the dramas, thus indisputably, unless his actual existence be doubted, proving the same authorship. Are not the following stanzas, for instance, worthy of the dramatist at his best?—

"Without the bed her other fair hand was,
On the green coverlet; whose perfect white

Showed like an April daisy on the grass,
With pearly sweat, resembling dew of night.
Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheath'd their light,
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,
Till they might open to adorn the day.

“ Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her breath ;
O modest wantons ! wanton modesty !
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,
And death's dim look in life's mortality :
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify,
As if between them twain there were no strife,
But that life liv'd in death, and death in life.”

To us, those lines are plainly Shaksperian in style, thought, and vigour—the ring being unmistakable. And the poem is full of such.

In “ Venus and Adonis ” also we have the same delicate fancy—the same imagery and passion as are found in the best plays. Who is there that is not able—*instantaneously*—to recognise the author of our glorious world dramas in the following stanzas?—

“ Forced to content, but never to obey,
Panting he lies and breatheth in her face ;
She feedeth on the steam, as on a prey,
And calls it heavenly moisture, air of grace,

Wishing her cheeks were gardens full of flowers,
So that they were dew'd with such distilling
showers."

"'Ah me,' quoth Venus, 'young, and so unkind!
What bare excuses mak'st thou to begone!
I'll sigh celestial breath, whose gentle wind
Shall cool the heat of this descending sun;
I'll make a shadow for thee of my hairs;
If they burn too, I'll quench them with my tears.'"

No poet of to-day, or of yesterday, writes like this. Even Tennyson and Edgar A. Poe, at their best, cannot compare with it—such is the richness of Shakspeare's fancy and passion—a richness and a charm found in all the productions generally assigned to him. In imagination, he holds rank with the greatest writers of Greece and Rome; in the delineation of character he has no rival; and in fancy the whole world of authors must bow to him, giving, as he does, to "airy nothing a local habitation and a name"; yes, and more than that—a joyous being. We contend that there is nothing fanciful in Bacon's fancy—nothing romantic and transparently spiritual, nothing that charms us in that weird, overpowering sense which is a very common characteristic of the actor-author.

But we are digressing, Shakspeare's fancy leading us astray. As to this noble poem ("Venus and Adonis"), however, have we not here many parallel lines to others found in the dramas? "Bribed the Destinies" at once reminds us of "Heaven will be bribed" in "King John"; and "What is thy body but a swallowing grave" suggests King Philip's description of Constance, when, having lost her son, she looks like "a grave unto her soul." Then, the frequent use of glass and mirror as metaphors in the songs and sonnets, as well as in the dramas, is very suggestive. In "Lucrece," Rome rhymes with doom and groom; while in "Julius Cæsar—"Now is it Rome indeed and room enough"—we have a pun in the words, "Rome indeed and room enough." And does not the following passage from the first heir of his invention remind us of Constance's passionate words to her son when he begs of her to be content:—

"Were I hard-favour'd, foul, or wrinkled—old,
 Ill nurtur'd, crooked, churlish, harsh in voice,
 O'erworn, despised, rheumatic, and cold,
 Thick sighted, barren, lean, and lacking juice,
 Then mightest thou pause, for then I were not for
 thee;
 But having no defect, why dost abhor me?"

Constance to Arthur.

“ If thou that bid’st me be content wert grim,
Ugly, and slanderous to thy mother’s womb,
Full of unpleasing blots and sightless stains,
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious,
Patch’d with foul moles and eye-offending marks,
I would not care, I then would be content ;
For then I should not love thee ; no, nor thou
Become thy great birth, nor deserve a crown.”

To us they prove the same authorship ; and those critics who are so sedulous in finding Baconian parallels to the sayings of Shakspeare, might find a more interesting and ample field for their learning in the poems of the dramatist, which are teeming with true Shaksperian expression and ring. His comedies appeared first in 1588—the “Comedy of Errors,” “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” “Love’s Labour Lost,” “Taming of the Shrew,” and others being composed during the following two years. About the year 1590, Shakspeare turned his attention to the writings of historic dramas (“Richard III.,” “Henry V. and VI.”). This would account for his silence in comedy, which Spenser bewails in his “Tears of the Muses,” published in 1591. That Shakspeare was meant by

Spenser cannot reasonably be doubted, but it will be our work presently to adduce such arguments and reasons as will justify that statement.

From 1594 to 1601 we find the dramatist turning out those magnificent historic plays, that pass like so many pageants before us. Then from 1602 to 1608 he is engaged upon some of his greatest tragedies, wherein his humour is somewhat more severe and caustic, while his passion is more intense and terrible. And, lastly, from that year till his retirement, and possibly after, the romantic play is his delight. Thus we see that this remarkable writer passes through four distinct stages of feeling and of thought—the comedy, the historical play, and the tragedy, and lastly, in his maturer years, he combines the three in his romance, having thereby sounded all the “depths and shoals” of heart and mind, and given to “airy nothing a local habitation and a name.”

His work was nearly done, and he retired, having, so to speak, exhausted his soul. He had but little more to say to the world.

But what proof have we that this peerless poet was the actor William Shakspeare? We believe our reader, from what we have written, is satisfied that the author

of the Shaksperian dramas was not Francis Bacon. Then our task is easy, and his contemporaries shall testify, the reader bearing in mind at all times that William Shakspere spent his life upon the stage, and that he was known as a dramatist and poet. Our first witness shall be Spenser. That Shakspere must have been acquainted with him is highly probable, for the author of the "Tears of the Muses" made a stay in London in the year 1589; and when we consider that the Earl of Essex (Bacon's benefactor), who was a friend of Spenser's, was also an intimate friend of the Earl of Southampton (Shakspere's patron and friend), we are justified in making the statement that, unless poets are different to all other people, and despise the sweet friendship of their fellows, Spenser and Shakspere were personal friends. This, we submit, is only natural; for, apart from his fame as a dramatist (which admits of no controversy), Shakspere was in the first rank as an actor. He was also a shareholder in theatres, and in the company of Queen's players the very year Spenser visited London, and was one of the sixteen names of players on the certificate to the Privy Council (which testified that the company acting at Blackfriars were "Her Majesty's poor players"),

and that at the early age of twenty-five. Surely the strides young Shakspeare had made in his profession, and that without any advantages, justifies the belief that he was a man of extraordinary parts, whose business aptitude was only excelled by his transcendent genius. As to the author of the "Faerie Queene," his testimony is doubly interesting, his lines having reference to Shakspeare's general disposition, no less than to his genius. He writes—

"The man whom nature's self had made
To mock herself and truth to imitate
With kindly counter under mimic shade";

while in the next line he speaks of this author as our "pleasant Willy."

Then he continues—

"But that some gentle spirit, from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow,
Scorning the boldness of such base-born men,
Which dare their follies forth so rashly throw,
Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell
Than so himself to mockery to sell."

The stage, as a result of the Reformation, was considerably purified, and Shakspeare glorified it. After the Restoration, it sank to the depths of a vulgar

show, and not till some time after did it again assume its Shaksperian dignity.

It should be remarked here, however, that abuse of a very personal kind had usurped the place of genuine and healthy comedy even in the master's time; some authors seemed to pander to the lowest tastes of their audience. But our "pleasant Willy" would not demean himself by writing such ribaldry, and had therefore allowed the rank and vulgar effusions for a brief span to play themselves out. For if he be coarse at times, it is simply out of necessity to do justice to his characters—never from want of delicacy, and every play in purpose breathes the balmy breath of sweet morality. He leads us through miry lanes only to walk the green fields; and though at times he pricks us with the thorn of peccancy, he is ever careful to reward us with the rose of virtue.

As to the epithet "pleasant," it coincides beautifully with the opinions entertained of Shakspere by his friends and contemporaries in general. He was "gentle" and "beloved" in disposition; "honey-tongued" and "silver-tongued" in speech; of "unfailing candour" in his dealings; while his "generosity of mind and mood" endeared him to all.

Then Aubrey, in his sincere fashion, describes the poet as "a handsome, well-shaped man, very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit." Exactly; just the man, judging from his intellect and heart, we should have thought him to be—beautiful in every way.

John Davies, writing in 1611, in a poem inscribed "To our English Terence, Mr. W. Shakspere," denotes clearly how public opinion regarded the man. He wrote—

"Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing:
Hadst thou not played some kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst been a companion for a king,
And been a king among the meaner sort."

The epithet "good Will" and "companion for a king" is very clear evidence of Shakspeare's disposition and worth, and shows that Spenser's "pleasant Willy" and "the man whom Nature's self had made," pointed to him. For if not, then to whom might the epithet be applied? There were no other authors of repute of the name William; neither were there any players, except William Kempe and William Johnson, and these were comparatively unknown.

And the leading player, Burbage—the greatest actor of his time—was Richard. Then the justness of the compliment paid to our “pleasant Willy,” every word being applicable to the actor, William Shakspere, constitutes an adequate reason for believing that it was meant for him, and could not possibly have reference to any other dramatist or actor. In the year 1592 appeared a very significant and an unmistakable allusion to Shakspere in Greene’s “Groatsworth of Witte.” Shakspere then was only 28 years old, while Greene, who was himself a celebrated writer of blank verse and an M.A., had earned but a precarious livelihood. He had abandoned his wife and had cohabited with another, dying in that year in great want. His effusion, therefore, is posthumous, and addressed to two fellow-actors, who were in much the same plight as himself. He writes—“There is an upstart crowe, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiges heart wrapt in a player’s hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you, and beeing an absolute Johannes Factotum is, in his own conceyt, the only Shaks-scene in a countrey.” The insult, however, is atoned for by the editor; but Shakspere doubtless makes a kindly allusion to

the three unfortunate players in a couplet in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary."

This most glorious Dream possessed the poet's mind subsequent to the decease of the three players referred to; hence the value of the couplet. The play upon Shakspeare's name in Greene's scurrilous effusion is obvious; and so is the reference to the dramatist's profession as an adapter, the expression *Johannes Factotum* being very suggestive. All this, however, is delightful, and much to the point, showing, as it does, how this young man, entirely by his own genius, had risen to the front as actor and author. And to be envied by a man of Greene's brilliant parts must be construed as a great compliment to Shakspeare, who must have exhibited some extraordinary qualities, and he so young a *Factotum*, to rouse the fierce spirit of envy in so able, if disreputable, a compeer. All Shakspeare's rivals were University men, and Greene failed to appreciate the writings of a man who had no claim to that distinction. To him the actor Shakspeare was an erratic comet causing disquietude among the

solar worlds; and he had to feel its consuming influence.

Yes, though the spirit displayed by this testimony is that of envy and abuse, it is, nevertheless, a rare compliment to our author, and almost as satisfactory as anything that was ever written of him. The spirit of envy only kills itself; and in this instance it is the bird of night that vanisheth before the rising sun. The envy of people is often the best proof of merit in others. We like this unwilling testimony; it is so natural—the very thing we should have looked for. A passage in Mere's "*Palladis Tamia, or Wit's Treasury*," published in 1598, bears testimony to Shakspeare's greatness. The author glorifies the productions of the actor, and gives the names of a large number of dramas as proofs of his surpassing excellence in comedy and tragedy, such as the "*Comedy of Errors*," "*Love's Labour Lost*," "*All's Well that Ends Well*," "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," "*Two Gentlemen of Verona*," "*The Merchant of Venice*," "*Richard II.*," "*Richard III.*," "*King John*," and "*Romeo and Juliet*." He also mentions Shakspeare's sugared sonnets as being circulated among his most intimate acquaintances. Our finest testimony, how-

ever, regarding Shakspeare's personality and genius is from Ben Jonson—Ben Jonson, the actor, dramatist, poet, scholar, and Shakspeare's lifelong friend. He corroborates what all the other witnesses have said. And we invite the reader to sift this evidence fairly, weighing with an even mind the candour, honesty, and disinterestedness of the writer, not forgetting the likelihood of all things. Shakspeare in the time of Jonson was quite illustrious, not only as an author but as a player, his superiority in the latter capacity being obvious from the fact that he appeared along with Richard Burbage, the star of his time, before Elizabeth, Christmastide, 1594. His eminence as an actor and author, therefore, placed him in a position to befriend other aspirants. And this was done to Jonson, whose play, "Every Man in his Humour," was introduced to public notice through the kindly interest of Shakspeare, who in the year 1598 took part in the performance of that play. He also took part in Jonson's "Sejanus" five years later. These facts are produced here to show that when Jonson speaks of Shakspeare's personality he speaks with authority, like one having all knowledge of the man; and Aubrey says that both actors "did gather humour of men

daily wherever they went." Evidently they knew each other, their characters as well as their capabilities. But what of Jonson's testimony? Here it is—"I love the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open, free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions."

On this side idolatry! How great must have been the worth of that man, how splendid his achievements, and how excellent his parts, to be deserving of such admiration on the part of one of the greatest men of his time! Surely Jonson, the ripe scholar and dramatist, must have seen something very exceptional in his friend, even in his person and character, not to mention his intellectual gifts, to be deserving of such an exalted tribute. Then, have we not Jonson's opinion of his friend's genius as a dramatist? Let the following eulogy speak. It appeared in the Folio Edition of 1623, only seven years after Shakspeare's death, and two years after Bacon's fall:—

*To the memory of my beloved master, William
Shakspeare, and what he hath left us.*

"To draw no envy, Shakspeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame ;

While I confess thy writings to be such
As neither man nor Muse can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise ;
For silliest ignorance on these would light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right ;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes and urges all by chance ;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to ruin where it seemed to raise.
But thou art proof against them, and, indeed,
Above the ill fortune of them, or the need.
I therefore will begin : Soul of the age !
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage !
My Shakspeare rise ! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little farther off to make thee room :
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still, while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,
I mean with great but disproportioned Muses ;
For if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee I will not seek
For names, but call forth thundering Aeschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to us,

Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To live again, to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage ; or when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all, that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time !
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or, like a Mercury, to charm !
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines !
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please ;
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of nature's family.
Yet must I not give nature all ; thy art,
My gentle Shakspere, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion ; and, that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muse's anvil ; turn the same,
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame ;
Or for the Laurel, he may gain a scorn ;
For a good poet's made as well as born.

And such wert thou! Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakspeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-turned and true-filed lines :
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandished at the eyes of Ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That did so take Eliza and our James!
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanced, and made a constellation there!
Shine forth, thou star of Poets, and with rage
Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage,
Which since thy flight from hence hath mourned
like Night,
And despairs Day, but for thy volume's light!"

We hope the reader, if he have not read these lines before, will now do so, though any further testimony of Shakspeare's greatness and authorship in consequence be deemed unnecessary. "Soul of the age, the applause, delight, and wonder of the stage!" What a testimony from the greatest of his rivals, and how lamentable it is to think that there are educated men in the world who cannot see the truth of the eulogy! Surely Ben Jonson, who had himself been

connected with the stage in Shakspeare's time for nineteen years, must have known the man—heart and mind; and nothing but a want of reflection, or an utter inability to take a common-sense view of things, can account for people being so easily led astray regarding the authorship of our incomparable dramas.

What, in the name of common sense, could have induced a great rival to glorify another, now that he was dead? There was nothing now to gain by his patronage—nothing further to benefit by his name. All that was gone, and truth alone remained. Let them prove Jonson a rogue, or confess that he was right.

“ Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That did so take Eliza and our James! ”

What could be more satisfactory than this tribute, despite the fact that the swan makes no flights? In the very poetical expression, “ Sweet Swan of Avon ”—a river which, to Shakspeare's contemporary, D'Avenant, had lost its beauty when the bard was no more—we have the dramatist as a man and poet—beautiful and graceful as a swan upon the waters.

Then, in the line "And make those flights upon the banks of Thames," we have a reference to his acting and his imagination—a very suggestive and forcible line in itself. And, finally, we have the writer's testimony, not only that Shakspeare was in the habit of playing before the crowned heads of his time, but that they were delighted with his acting and with his own works—his flights. Nothing could be more complimentary to the actor-dramatist, or more satisfactory to the world. Yet there is one other expression of Jonson's which is very significant. We refer to the words "and what he had left us" quoted in the title. They obviously refer to his works, whose value untold ages will not cease to extol, being doubtless the noblest literary heritage which one generation will receive at the hand of the other. This testimony is enough. But Jonson's admiration of the dramatist was unbounded; he loved to praise him. And not only did he consider him the soul of the age, but he had no hesitation in declaring him to be the greatest poet of all time, the "Star of Poets," superior "to all that insolent Greece and haughty Rome had sent forth." Yet because he speaks of Bacon, a few years later, in identical terms, and that he "had filled up the

numbers," the critics conclude that Bacon was the author of the dramas! But Jonson was right in both eulogies, for one is as true as the other. He knew both writers, poet and philosopher, to be worthy of comparison with the greatest souls of Greece and Rome. His encomium is absolutely correct in either case. As to the expression "had filled up all numbers," the meaning is that Bacon had touched upon all the forms of learning—a poet too, if you will, only that he had not expressed himself in metre. He was a philosopher, a metaphysician, a historian, a naturalist, etc., the circle of knowledge in him was complete. To suggest that Jonson meant that the philosopher and statesman had composed the Shaksperian dramas, is to suppose that both he and Bacon were satisfied to speak in equivocal terms throughout life, mislead the world, heap undying honours upon a dead actor (and only him!) and lay themselves open to be dubbed the most mysterious fools that ever lived. Even if Jonson, for some inexplicable reason, had kept Bacon's secret until that great man's death, why, in the name of common sense, should he afterwards, during the ten years he survived him, have kept the secret? Would he not *then* have revealed the

truth? or was he prepared and satisfied to be enshrouded in a monstrous lie? Not he. Jonson was satisfied to read the Folio Edition throughout life as the genuine and complete work of his dead friend, who "made those flights upon the banks of Thames," and whom he idolised in life and whose memory was ever dear to his heart, the source of much inspiration and calm delight. Perhaps it would not be without interest to give here his opinion of Bacon, so that calm and judicious minds may have an opportunity of judging which was the greater man in his estimation. Jonson, it is well-known, was at one time, and perhaps for a long period, a kind of amanuensis to Bacon, he being an accomplished Latin scholar. He therefore had peculiar and ample opportunities of forming an opinion of his great master, whose fine intellectual powers and grand personality, we may be sure, would not fail to impress him greatly.

He writes—"My conceit of his [Bacon's] person was never increased towards him by his place or honours, but I have, and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, *one* of the greatest men and most worthy of admiration that had been in

many ages." This certainly is high praise; yet note the difference between it and the eulogy bestowed upon the actor William Shakspere.

Bacon he regarded with reverence and admiration; Shakspere almost with idolatry. The dramatist was to him "the Star of Poets," "the Soul of the Age"—the age of so many great men, yes, even of Bacon himself. The philosopher he regarded as being "one of the greatest men of many ages"—a compliment often bestowed upon our leading contemporaries. And yet Ben Jonson—"rare Ben Jonson"—knew one as well as the other, not only what they were to the world by means of their productions, but what they were, seated at home. He was cognisant of the entire man—his moral worth and his intellectual greatness; but Shakspere to him, obviously, was the greater soul—a soul whose inspiration was almost divine. As to the expression, "little Latin and less Greek," Jonson obviously meant it as a compliment to Shakspere, and a proof of his natural gifts. It was not to belittle his scholarship so much as to glorify his genius that Jonson uttered those memorable words. A friend can have no delectation in belittling a friend. The actor's knowledge of Latin and Greek was only

elementary in comparison with that of Jonson, who was a great classic scholar, like all Shakspeare's literary contemporaries. Shakspeare, however, must have possessed a good knowledge of Italian and French; there was nothing to hinder him. For not only were linguistic accomplishments encouraged in the aspiring reigns of Elizabeth and James, but the greatest professor of those languages in London, John Folio, was a personal friend of Shakspeare, the Earl of Southampton being a patron of both. There was nothing remarkable in an author being able to show proficiency in those languages. On the contrary, indeed, ignorance of them would have been inexcusable; and Shakspeare would have acquired a sound knowledge of them if only for general culture and his capacity of adapter. He would scarcely be satisfied with the contempt of his rivals in this respect—he, William Shakspeare. As to the author's general knowledge, with his romance and historic lore, were not the old Chronicles, with numerous translations of Continental works, at his disposal in common with every other writer? And might we not suppose that his knowledge of Wales and of Welshmen was obtained from Jenkins, his old master at the Grammar School,

Stratford, who was a thorough Cymro? Admiration for one's master begets love for his nation. And Shakspeare has a good word for Welshmen, though their accent, as given in the plays, is somewhat broad and crude. It was not his linguistic knowledge, however, nor any other form of book lore that surprises us; his real greatness lay underneath all that. It was his knowledge of nature in her myriad moods, his inspiration, his familiarity with the Invisible, and the ineffable sympathy and affection of his heart that was incomparable. What other writer can compare with him in his knowledge of the heart of man? And his most brilliant compeer was but a child to him. He knew by inspiration, his very disadvantage only tending to show his genius and magnify him in our eyes as an observer and a thinker. He was a god.

But we have yet another testimony as to the genuineness of the Shaksperian authorship. We refer to his two "pious fellows"—his fellow-actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, who edited the Folio Edition that appeared in 1623. Would not these able men, we ask, know the man Shakspeare thoroughly? Can anyone conceive of their attributing wrongly to him the authorship of those immortal works? Why

should all these contemporaries of Shakspeare—fellow-actors of all men—connive together to immortalise him? The very fact that all these witnesses, including Richard Burbage, the greatest actor of his time—people who had “lived, moved, and had their very being” with the man—the very fact that these witnesses credit him with the authorship is enough for all reasonable minds. These men would have known whether or not William Shakspeare had the necessary knowledge and genius to compose the dramas.

The editor of the Folio Edition knew him of course to be the author, and the only possible author, and while they depreciate the imperfect copies previously published, declare that they are now “cured and perfect, while the eighteen plays not previously published are absolute in their numbers.”

That is testimony from the fountain-head; and all the works of Shakspeare point to the same authorship, having the same stamp of genius, which, after all, is our unerring guide.

That “Cymbeline,” “Julius Cæsar,” “A Winter’s Tale,” “Measure for Measure,” and other masterpieces were not printed till 1623, seven years after Shakspeare’s death, is no proof that they were not his pro-

ductions. And we know that "Macbeth," "Twelfth Night," and "All's Well that Ends Well," though not printed till that year, were nevertheless played in the time of Shakspeare, though certainly not quite in the form they were published. But that should cause no great surprise; since the work of every dramatist is conveniently altered and curtailed for the stage. But Shakspeare was first an author, then an actor; he lived for mankind, not merely for a London audience, his drama being not only national but universal. And in the Folio Edition his editors wisely give the plays as they emanated from his perfect touch, and for that service John Heminge and Henry Condell deserve the gratitude of mankind. If it be possible that Shakspeare had not taken steps to get "Cymbeline," etc., performed, it is stranger still, if Bacon was the author, how he had not done so, seeing how their performance would have benefited him when he was cast off by his country. But the philosopher allowed the Folio Edition to go unchallenged as Shakspeare's work, while he himself lived in comparative want and disgrace, anxious only to pursue his philosophical studies. People are only plunging into the very stream of difficulties and doubts when they suggest

Bacon as the author of our great English dramas ; but with Shakspeare "all things are possible." His vocation and inspiration transcended all book-knowledge. Nature revealed herself to him.

Shakspeare, doubtless, had one fault—he was not ambitious. His life, like his works, was objective, so very different to Bacon's, which was all subjective. We know nothing of his religious and political creeds : they cannot even be guessed. The man himself is gloriously dumb. And he seemed to have kept himself aloof from all dissensions and scandals, retiring, almost saint-like, to live with nature and commune with the Invisible. He was a most lovable soul, but shrank from all earthly honours, it is quite evident, having acquired success in life and undying fame in spite of himself. He was satisfied to have sung his spirit forth—and what a song!—leaving posterity in cruel ignorance of much of his glorious personality. He came to reveal human nature to the world—not himself. And his greatness in *not* revealing himself to the world—his own sentiments and opinions—is as truly great as his revelation of nature. But this obliteration of self is more than great, since it is more than human ; it has a touch of the supernatural

about it; it is beautiful, and we love him the more for it.

Bacon, writing to Essex, confesses that his "nature could take no evil ply." That is subjective enough. But Shakspeare would never have written so; he was above all that, and loved far more than the philosopher did. Indeed, his love was as great as his intellect, and that was truly gigantic. It is not always so; the intellect too often, when it is the stronger power in the soul of man, leads the heart astray. The world has known a sufficient number of men who, endowed with superb mental powers but lacking in love, were the curse of the land. Napoleon Bonaparte was a giant in intellect, perhaps as great as Shakspeare himself; but what of his love? A life of warfare and of blood does not bespeak the angel in man; the noblest attribute after all is wanting. For love makes the intellect greater, beautifying and strengthening the whole thing with its sanctities. This was the power of Christ—love which made even His sacrifice inevitable, and the very thing the world stood in need of—moulding it into shape. It proves the divinity of Christ. It was also the power of Mr. Gladstone, great though his intellect was.

Carlyle, in his "Lectures on Heroes," after making an extraordinary effort (which is that great writer's failing) to show that intellect is everything in man, says, "The degree of vision that dwells in a man is a correct measure of the man." By no means. There are people who, though their intellectual vision may be limited, are yet uncircumscribed in love; while there are others who, wanting in conscience and heart, find that their surpassing intellect is made of little consideration. Intellect is one thing; the heart is another, especially for good. Had Bacon loved more and flattered less, history could show no greater figure. But he stands before us as a mighty intellect only. "If I say that Shakspeare is the greatest of intellects," continues the great critic, "I have said all concerning him." Has he? We trow not. The poet would never have been able to compose those heart-moving dramas and outshine all other writers if intellect alone was his power. Shakspeare's love for all things (except wrong and sin, which he denounces with a vehemence that suggests divine inspiration) was as great as his knowledge of them; he bedewed all with his love. A poet without love, and a great poet without great love, is an impossibility, for poetry is the

art of love. The devil, doubtless, is intellectual enough, but has he a heart?

What is genius? It is not merely a physiological structure finely developed and developing as Carlyle would have us believe, but rather intellect in touch with divinity, so that in its higher productions it breathes of inspiration. Mere intellect and book-lore cannot form a substitute for it; it is the *afflatus* which brings to us the breath of the divinity itself. The affinity between the genius of Shakspeare and the genius, so to speak, of the writers of the Scriptures—the affinity between his love and that of the prophets—is something very real. To us he is a prophet that will be heard throughout all time, his works being something of another revelation, this time of nature.

Greatness of soul—and Carlyle might have admitted it without attempting anything more subtle or new—was the greatness of William Shakspeare, power of intellect and power of consecrated love, the entire being of the man. But where Shakspeare shone, Bacon paled—that is in heart and self-effacement. Bacon looked into nature with an inquisitive and clear glance, and saw her. But he did not feel with her and for her. He was simply a spectator, not a

child of nature basking in her genial sunshine. The fact that he interested himself in the death of such men as Essex and Raleigh (professional duties notwithstanding) is sufficient proof of that; he loved himself first, appealing to his philosophy and not to his love. Self-sacrifice is the first fruit of real greatness—even of God Himself. No one can sing a love song leading his friend to the gallows. Bacon could never have indited those lines which Wolsey addressed to Cromwell—"Love thyself last, cherish those hearts that hate thee; corruption wins not more than honesty." But Shakspeare loved divinely, and his life was blameless in consequence.

That he composed little or nothing in his retirement, after 1612, is not to be wondered at. He had composed so much that his spirit must have stood in need of rest, which, doubtless, was the object of his retirement—rest. For little is heard of him after leaving the stage and the metropolis. Perhaps the death of his brother and of his mother had touched him too acutely to indulge in much playwriting; for his compositions subsequent to those mortalities, which took place in 1607 and 1608 respectively, are more terrible in passion, while his fancy is less soft,

cheerful, and alluring. Indeed, even his pathos is somewhat tragic.

Much the same thing occurred in Jonson's life. He composed nothing for nine years after the death of Shakspeare, and his productions afterwards were unworthy of his fame. You cannot sing when the heart bleeds; that alone attunes the spirit of man. But in the case of Shakspeare, since his demise came so early—he being only fifty-two—it is highly probable that he was conscious that the “muddy vesture of decay” was indeed decaying, and that soon he would have “to shuffle of this mortal coil.” Hence ambition had no room in his heart. It is true that a month before he died, when he was preparing to write his Will, he testified he was “in perfect health and memory.” That, however, was only a conventional form of expression to meet the law, it being unnecessary for a man of only fifty-two to add that his memory was good, if he was in perfect health. He probably felt, judging by his silence in his retirement, that the end was near. The great drama of his own life was drawing to a close, the last scene was before his eyes, and soon the curtain would fall to rise no more. The time was for reflecting rather than acting.

We shall now make some miscellaneous observations with regard to certain points emphasised by some critics as tending to prove the Baconian authorship of the plays. The dramatist's learning, and particularly his knowledge of legal terms, seems to lend colour to their idea, the philosopher being a lawyer. But an educated man, such as Shakspeare was, would scarcely have been ignorant of such legal terms as mortgage, double-vouchers, fee-simple, recovery, entail; and surely such every-day words as arrest, plea, bill, suits, warrant, etc., needed no great legal or forensic lore to understand their true significance. He must have known these from childhood. But what of the military and naval terms that abound in the plays, and other expressions and terms indicative of other vocations? Are we to believe that the author must have passed through such vocations to know their distinctive terms? Then, what of Bacon? He was not a soldier or a sailor, neither had he known any other vocation than that of a lawyer.

It should be remembered that the genius of Shakspeare was no less observant than creative. It took in all things at a glance—and more. One observation saw another as a thought produces a thought. It was

not so much studying as observing, and not so much observing as seeing at a glance. The very fact that he was an adapter when quite a young man, proves his erudition and all-round capabilities, he having at least sufficient knowledge and even classic education when he left his native town to acquire more. He observed and saw, and sang with delight. With regard to Stratford-on-Avon and St. Albans our critics argue that because the latter place which is associated with Bacon's name is mentioned twenty-three times in the plays, whereas Stratford-on-Avon, Shakspeare's birthplace, is not mentioned at all—the authorship points to the statesman and not to the actor! But could anything be more puerile and shallow? It is quite obvious that such thinkers, though their assiduity in reading the plays does them credit, have not done so to any intellectual advantage. The author of the great dramas, they should have remembered, was not a sentimentalist or a subjective writer, giving expression to his own personal feeling as Bacon did. Of all great men Bacon is the most subjective in life and writings, while Shakspeare is the most objective. His work—his mission—was infinitely higher than self, even higher than his histrionic

art, which was to reveal nature in her myriad moods, and give to facts their proper place and significance. How little such critics have understood the genius and mission of the author, and the correctness and perfect art of his productions, is made obvious by such childish suggestions. There are altogether nine hundred towns and places mentioned in the dramas, not one of which, however, found a place therein out of mere sentiment, but of artistic or historic necessity. Had he written otherwise, his name would have been forgotten; but Shakspeare had a mission, and a sublime one. The man, however, *did* do honour to his native place, and that in a rational and thoughtful manner.

The Queen's Players, of whom Shakspeare was one, visited Stratford-upon-Avon in the year 1587, only five years since he had left the place a raw youth, he being then but twenty-three years old. That, doubtless, was meant by the players as a compliment to the young actor no less than to his native place, they being proud of one who, in the space of five years, without any influence but that of his own sterling talents and worth, had risen in his profession to the honourable position of Queen's Player. That was the way to remember his native town—to associate him-

self with its life as he afterwards did, and not by a mere sentimental reference in his works to the place. In that again Shakspeare was true to his art; he was an objective writer; his own life was not allowed to insinuate itself into his creations.

St. Albans is mentioned because of its great historic associations—the scene of the first martyrdom, its ancient ecclesiastical buildings, and battles fought there. It could no more be left out than Stratford-upon-Avon could be drawn in. Besides, it is only twenty miles from London—only too near to share in the great Metropolis' surging political quarrels.

In 1455 a battle was fought there between the Yorkists and Lancastrians, the former under Richard, Duke of York, being victorious, taking Henry VI. prisoner. Six years after, another battle was fought there by the contending parties, the Lancastrians, under Queen Margaret, being victorious over the Earl of Warwick. In "Henry VI." (Part II.), we have a scene at St. Albans. A miracle is wrought at the shrine of the Saint, and the Mayor and townsmen introduce the man to the King. This scene is natural, the King and Queen being much interested in the supposed supernatural act.

Queen: "Tell me, good fellow, cam'st thou here by chance or of devotion to this holy shrine?"

Simpcot: "God knows of pure devotion, being called a hundred times and oftener, in my sleep by good Saint Alban."

This scene represents the Christian character of the town.

In the 3rd part, Act II., Warwick says—

"Ten days ago I drowned these news in tears,
 And now, to add more measure to your woes,
 I come to tell you things since then befallen
 After the bloody fray at Wakefield fought,
 Where your brave father breathed his latest gasp,
 Tidings as swiftly as the posts could run,
 Were brought of your loss and his depart,
 I, then in London, keeper of the King,
 Mustered my soldiers, gathered flocks of friends,
 And very well appointed, as I thought,
 Marched towards Saint Albans to intercept the
 Queen,
 Bearing the King in my behalf along;
 For by my scouts I was advertised
 That she was coming with a full intent
 To dash our late decree in Parliament
 Touching King Henry's oath and your succession.
 Short tale to make—we at St. Albans met,
 Our battles joined, and both sides fiercely fought."

That quotation shows how the town figures in the history of the feuds of the country—drawn, of course, into the drama out of artistic and historic necessity—and not of mere hollow sentiment.

Stratford-upon-Avon, on the contrary, had no such interest, though prior to the Conquest it was a place of some consequence.

Another argument to prove that Bacon was the author, which is equally trivial and pointless, is the one advanced with respect to the reign of Henry VII. Bacon wrote a history of that reign but Shakspeare has no drama of it. Our critics, therefore, argue that Shakspeare did not write the other historical plays. Could anything be more captious, anything more elaborately curious? If these critics had reflected for one brief moment, they would have seen that the reign of Henry VII. is peculiarly a field for the historian, and not for the dramatist. The two roses were united at last, and a reign of peace had commenced, and nothing but that monarch's aggrandisement over his people, fleecing them at his ease, together with some hopeless insurrections, mark this reign. We should have been surprised to find a play of Henry VII. by Shakspeare, it being so devoid of

dramatic incidents throughout, so very different to the following reign. That reign was pregnant with events of abiding interest. Its historic pageantries; the arraignment of Buckingham; the new religion that was to change the map and life of Europe, and with sovereign hope put aspiring life into a greater continent, which, throughout the long ages, had remained dormant in the universe of God, and from which no anthem had yet arisen to sound His praise; the divorce of Katherine, the sorrowful Queen, whose very virtues proved her ruin, and who, like a deer in a far-off, sequestered glade, "was bayed about by many enemies," chief of whom was her own consort—a royal scoundrel; and, lastly, the fall of Wolsey ("that child of honour"), whose death pierced the old religion to the quick, and gave the representatives of the rival worship the opportunity to mould the destinies of the State. All these appealed to the dramatist irresistibly, especially the divorce of the saintly Queen, whose plea for justice and the maintaining of her honour are scenes of infinite pathos. But Henry VII. has little or nothing to touch our hearts. To the historian, moreover, it afforded a most interesting field, marking another era in English

politics. But some people cannot see these things no more than they can understand the genius and mission of the world dramatist. As to the disposal of his works, and how came it to pass that no mention is made of them in his Will, we can only believe that they were not then in his possession. Assuredly not, for Jonson and his fellow-actors had sufficient knowledge of their merit to make that an impossibility. And why should Shakspeare keep them by him? He had sung for the delectation and edification of the world, and to dispose of his works for that object must, we may feel assured, have given that great heart the sweetest of pleasures. In this again we find Shakspeare true to himself by being faithful to his art, even to the complete effacement of his own self.

But if it be remarkable that he makes no allusion to them, is it not equally remarkable, if Bacon was the author, how he makes no mention of them, the more so that he is careful to dispose of his letters, speeches, and epistles in his Will? Had it not been for the fire which completely gutted the Globe Theatre in 1613, we might, however, have been in possession of some papers that would have thrown some "kindly light" on this incomparable genius' life and labours.

But no, the fire occurred and ruthlessly destroyed all, as if Providence were determined we should know little of the man. What a destructive fire! In conclusion, we may be excused for drawing the reader's attention to the dramatist's portrait as being expressive of great genius. The portrait by Martin Droeshout, prefixed to the edition of 1623, when Shakspeare's countenance was still fresh and clear to the minds of editors and reader's alike, impresses us greatly with the grandeur of its features, and in particular with the abnormal and altogether magnificent development of the forehead—the large, luminous eyes being full of inspiration and love. The lines which follow it with the signature "B. J." (Ben Jonson) attest the faithfulness of the picture. The bust at Stratford, by Gerard Johnson, erected after the dramatist's death, is of the same character and a sufficient proof of the genuineness of the likeness, which is the grandest face in all the splendid gallery of our great men. It is a noble, perfect countenance; we could not conceive of it being different. It is suggestive of all that is great and all that is beautiful in the being of man—a glorious mirror of a glorious soul. O the greatness and love of William Shakspeare!



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